RESEARCH PROJECT – sample body paragraphs

There are two types of guilt, real guilt and false guilt. Real guilt is a person’s conscience; this tells a person when you are doing something wrong. False guilt is when a person feels responsible for something they did not do (“Guilt Problems”). An example of real guilt would be in the novel A *Separate Peace* by John Knowles, when Gene visits Finny at his home in Boston. At this point, Gene’s conscience is telling him he should fix his wrongdoing, pushing Finny off the tree. Initially his guilt comes from seeing the former athlete as “an invalid, house-bound” (68). Later in the conversation, when Finny refuses to even entertain the notion that Gene caused the accident, this causes Gene’s guilt to increase: his friend will not accept the suggestion that Gene could ever hurt him, so Gene now has no way to absolve his guilt.

An example of false guilt would be in the memoir *Night* by Elie Weisel, when he saw all the “children thrown into the flames” (32). That is an example of false guilt because he did not cause that to happen. However, in this case Elie has no idea that the guilt he has for the babies is false guilt. People usually cannot recognize that their guilt is false (“Guilt Problems”). In both the memoir and novel, even though they were example of real guilt and false guilt, the boys’ identities both changed throughout their stories. Even if people have false guilt, it can still form or deform who they are.